

St. Max puts a modern spin on Remembrance Services



By Brock Weir

Stepping into St. Maximilian Kolbe Secondary School in the lead-up to Remembrance Day, you're greeted with the sight of poppies falling from the sky, scattering on a tomb representing the Unknown Soldier.

The iconic symbols of remembrance are fixed onto string and interwoven around the tableau to create the illusion and it is this display that students filed past on Friday for their Remembrance Day ceremonies which took on a decidedly modern twist.

Complete with dance segments and contemporary-yet-evocative songs brought to life by the powerful voices of the student body, it paid tribute to the fallen, the everyday heroes, and those individuals who might otherwise become footnotes in our own history, including First Nations Silver Cross Mothers.

As students settled into the service, they asked to refrain from clapping and, most importantly, turn off their cell phones.

"I think it is important we put aside all distractions and become present," said music teacher Brad Bobesich. "We use this 25 minute presentation as an opportunity to be collected and meditate. Much like meditation, instead of thinking of the breath, it is louder, we meditate on ideas and the idea of sacrifice. The deeper your reflection, it becomes something more personal, a meditation on gratitude. I hope you have taken a moment today to realise how lucky we are to live in the country we live in."

Taking a moment to consider how lucky Canadians are to live in this country is something students are regularly encouraged to do, but Mr. Bobesich ventured that it was a sentiment that took on some extra meaning following the U.S. Presidential Election little more than 48 hours before the assembly.

"Not to get too political, but this is certainly timely," he said. "I don't know how many of you have thought about how many Americans are giving serious thought to moving up here because of the election campaign. I don't know what your political ideas are, but it really reinforces in me and I hope in you how lucky we are to be here."

But while cell phones were turned off for the ceremony, their importance in our day to day lives was also underscored. They were, he said, a "direct by-product of military engineering."

"They realised there was a profound need to communicate platoon to platoon updates, status, casualties, enemy fire," he said. "They cracked the code and did it and it changed the world forever with wireless communication and cell phones [through] military engineering."

As the importance of wireless technology grew, the tried and true methods of communication over the centuries began to shrink into the background, such as the bagpipes that led soldiers into battle, the drums that set marching tempos and the trumpets and bugles which were vital in sending signals.

Trumpet in hand and accompanied by student teacher Carlos Santos, Mr. Bobesich explained how the waning importance of the bugle experienced an unexpected resurgence.

"The last post was a simple melody with a very practical purpose," he said. "It was signifying the end of the day, but as technology got more advanced and the trumpet was being used less and less, we started using that same melody as the Last Post in a completely different way and it has become the haunting melody we know and love today."

?It is a very profound piece and it is very difficult to play because you want to get it right. What began just as a literal signing off at the end of the day became poetically the end of days to honour all those who would not see it.?